

**Abstract**

A vacuum cleaner comprises a rigid dirt receptacle 14 having an outlet at one end, through which the collected dirt and dust can be emptied, a flap 16 for closing the outlet, and 5 an actuator 58 for moving the flap 16 between a closed position and an open position, the actuator 58 being operable to control the position of the flap 16 between the open and closed positions.

A location is provided at a partially opened position 10 of the flap 16, at which position fine dirt and dust can be emptied through the restricted outlet in a controlled manner. The restricted size of the outlet retains any coarse and fibrous dirt inside the receptacle 14. Once the fine dirt has been emptied, the flap 16 can be moved to its fully open 15 position to allow the coarse dirt and fibrous matter to be emptied from the receptacle 14 separately from the fine dust.